

# Nhanda language

**Nhanda**, also rendered **Nhanta** and **Nhandi**, is an Australian Aboriginal language from the Midwest region of Western Australia, between Geraldton and the Murchison River, from the coast to about 20 kilometres (12 mi) inland. The language is now spoken, or semi-spoken, by only a few people.

The [AIATSIS](#) Austlang database says: "According to [Juliette] Blevins (2001:3) three dialects of Nhanda can be identified: Nhanda, the northernmost dialect, **Watchandi** W13, the central dialect, and **Amangu** W12, the southern dialect. Thus Nhanda is both a language name and a dialect name". No speakers are listed in successive tallies since 1975, but the [Irra Wangga Language Centre](#) (formerly Yamaji Language Centre) has been working on its [revival](#), originally led by Blevins.<sup>[1]</sup> [Nanakarti](#) was apparently a distinct language.

While Nhanda is usually considered a member of the [Kartu branch](#) of the [Pama–Nyungan family](#),<sup>[4]</sup> distinctive features of Nhanda, relative to neighbouring languages have caused some linguists to question this classification,<sup>[5][6]</sup> and/or classify Nhanda as an [isolate](#).

A controversial hypothesis, first raised by historian [Rupert Gerritsen](#), suggests that the unusual features of Nhanda may result from undocumented [language contact](#) during the early modern era, with [Dutch](#) – in the form of [shipwrecked seafarers](#) stranded in Australia before [European settlement](#) had officially begun.<sup>[7]</sup> Gerritsen's hypothesis has been rejected by linguist [Juliette Blevins](#),<sup>[8]</sup> an authority on Nhanda.

<b>Nhanda</b>	
<b>Native to</b>	Australia
<b>Region</b>	Geraldton to Shark Bay area of Western Australia
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Nhanda
<b>Native speakers</b>	0 (2001) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Pama–Nyungan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kartu?</li> <li>▪ Nhanda–Nhanhagardi</li> <li>▪ <b>Nhanda</b></li> </ul>
<b>Dialects</b>	Nhanta Watchandi Amangu ? Ngukaja / Naaguja
<b>Language codes</b>	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	nha
<b>Glottolog</b>	nhan1238 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/id/nhan1238">http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/id/nhan1238</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>AIATSIS</b> <sup>[3]</sup>	w14 ( <a href="https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/W14">https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/language/W14</a> )

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# Vocabulary

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The Nhanda word for 'man, human being' is *arnmanu*. It appears that when Norman Tindale collected information on Nhanda (or on the closely related variety thought to have been spoken in Geraldton) he was given this word, which he recorded as 'Amangu' and believed to be the 'tribal name' for this group.

## Phonology

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Nhanda differs somewhat from its neighbouring languages in that it has a phonemic glottal stop, is initial-dropping (i.e. it has lost many initial consonants, leading to vowel-initial words) and the stop consonants show a phonemic length contrast.

### Vowels

	Front	Back
High	i i:	u u:
Low	a a:	

### Consonants

	Peripheral		Laminal		Apical		Glottal
	Bilabial	Velar	Palatal	Dental	Alveolar	Retroflex	
<u>Stop</u>	p	k	c	t̪	t	t̪	?
<u>Nasal</u>	m	n̪	n̪	n̪	n	n̪	
<u>Lateral</u>			ʎ	ɻ	l	ɻ	
<u>Rhotic</u>					r	r̪	
<u>Semivowel</u>	w	j					

## Language revival

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Juliette Blevins, at the time employed at The Australian National University, researched the language in the 1990s and early 2000s in collaboration with the Yamaji Language Centre (now the Irra Wangga Language Centre). An illustrated wordlist and a dictionary are in production. Published works include a sketch grammar of Nhanda (*Nhanda Sketch Grammar*, 2001), as well as papers on its phonology and history.<sup>[9]</sup> Doug Marmion has also been working on the language.<sup>[1]</sup>

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